

VZCZCXYZ0000  
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHBO #7158/01 2762325  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 032325Z OCT 07  
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9269  
INFO RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY 7774  
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 9359  
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ OCT 8943  
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA PRIORITY 5448  
RUEHZP/AMEMBASSY PANAMA PRIORITY 0671  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 1078  
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO PRIORITY 6048  
RUEHGL/AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL PRIORITY 4092  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 007158

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/04/2017  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PREF](#) [VZ](#) [CO](#)  
SUBJECT: FARC TIE RELEASE OF "SONIA" AND "SIMON TRINIDAD"  
TO RELEASE OF U.S. HOSTAGES

Classified By: Political Counselor John S. Creamer  
Reasons: 1.4 (b) and (d)

-----  
SUMMARY  
-----

1. (C) The FARC published an editorial on October 2 calling for the GOC to grant a demilitarized zone for talks on a humanitarian accord and demanding the release of FARC members "Sonia" and "Simon Trinidad" from U.S. custody as part of a deal. Catholic priest Father Echeverri, who attended Venezuelan President Chavez' September 25 meeting with Senator Piedad Cordoba and the U.S. hostages' family members, told us Chavez and Cordoba believe the USG will negotiate the sentences of "Sonia" and "Simon" and are advising the FARC to insist on their inclusion in an exchange. End Summary

-----  
FARC TIES U.S. HOSTAGES TO "SIMON" AND "SONIA"  
-----

2. (U) On October 2, the FARC's official website published an editorial, dated September 28 and authored by FARC Secretariat member "Ivan Marquez," calling on the GOC to

SIPDIS  
grant the group a demilitarized zone ("despeje") and demanding the release of FARC members "Sonia" and "Simon Trinidad" from U.S. custody as part of a "humanitarian exchange" of FARC-held hostages for FARC members in Colombian jails. "Ivan Marquez" said U.S. hostages Marc Gonsalves, Keith Stansell, and Thomas Howes were "spies captured in Colombia on a technical intelligence mission," and called their extradition "blackmail." He said the "easy road" would be an "exchange of complete packets of prisoners in custody of the contending parties." Commenting on President Uribe's statements that the GOC will not seek the release of FARC members convicted in the United States, Marquez concluded, "You cannot call it an exchange if one of the parties does not receive their people."

-----  
CHAVEZ: SHORT WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY  
-----

3. (C) Catholic Church and Conciliation Commission

representative Father Dario Echeverri told us September 28 he spoke privately with Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez for 15-20 minutes, after attending Chavez' September 25 meeting with Senator Piedad Cordoba and the U.S. hostage families. Chavez was well-informed about Echeverri's efforts to promote a FARC-ELN cease-fire in Arauca, and asked Echeverri to review past Catholic Church efforts to negotiate a humanitarian exchange with the FARC. Echeverri told Chavez he had a 15 minute window of opportunity in which to achieve an accord. He urged Chavez not to repeat the mistakes of past facilitation efforts by focusing on issues such as a despeje or concentrating his message on FARC leader Manuel Marulanda. (Note: Echeverri has previously told us he thinks Marulanda is either dead or incapacitated.) Echeverri told Chavez he should present new formulas and aim his dialogue at the entire FARC Secretariat. Chavez said he appreciated the advice, adding that GOV officials met with a FARC Secretariat member (likely "Ivan Marquez") in Venezuela while Cordoba was meeting with Raul Reyes in Colombia.

-----  
CHAVEZ AND CORDOBA EXPECT USG DEAL ON SIMON AND SONIA  
-----

¶4. (C) Echeverri said the FARC's "advisors" --Cordoba and Chavez-- are telling the FARC they should pressure the USG by linking the release of the U.S. hostages to the return of Sonia and Simon. He said FARC Secretariat member Fabian Ramirez would likely try to add his brother, FARC member Erminson Cabrerias Cuevas ("Mincho"), who was extradited to the United States on September 20. Cordoba and Venezuelan Foreign Minister Nicolas Maduro told Echeverri in Caracas the USG would accept a "triangulation" in which the USG would send Simon and Sonia to France. The French would then return them to Colombia. Cordoba and Maduro dismissed Uribe's comments that the GOC opposes the two's return, saying this

would not stop the USG from sending them to a third country. Echeverri said Chavez, Cordoba, and Maduro believe the USG is willing to negotiate Simon's and Sonia's sentences.

-----  
CHAVEZ: RESPECTFUL MEETING WITH U.S. FAMILIES  
-----

¶5. (C) Echeverri told us Chavez managed the meeting with the U.S. hostage family members extremely well. He quickly won the hearts of the two young children in the group, and through them, the other family members. It made for very effective television, he added. Chavez guided the conversation to reflect his points, noting at one point that "he feared the FARC would insist on equivalence between the three U.S. hostages, Simon and Sonia." Still, Chavez was respectful of President Bush and the families. Echeverri said Chavez claimed he knew the task would be difficult, but stressed his commitment to achieve the hostages' release.  
Brownfield